

PROGRESSIVISM UNIVERSITY

Mr. Nikitin - Dean of Students

Report Card - January 1913

William Howard Taft

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500

Major: Progressive Era President

Minor: Law

Cumulative GPA: 1.04 (Academic Probation)

COURSE TITLE

Protecting Social Welfare	D-	Taft demonstrated little aptitude in the area of conservation. His appointee for Secretary of the Interior, Richard Ballinger, clearly sided with business interests. He removed 1 million acres of land from the reserved list and clearly failed to comprehend the importance of conserving the nation's natural resources. Taft is not responsible for any significant social welfare reforms.
Creating Economic Reform	B	This is the one area where Taft did take some significant action. Although passed after Taft left office, he was instrumental in passing the 16 th Amendment (federal income tax). He also initiated 90 anti-trust law suits (twice the number of the so-called "trust buster" TR) and expanded the ICC's jurisdiction to include telephones, telegraphs, and radio. However, his support for the Payne-Aldrich Tariff prevented him from earning an A in this course. This bill only served to raise tariffs and benefit large business owners.
Creating Political Reform	D	Taft's support for political boss Joseph Cannon earns him low marks in this course. Cannon frequently blocked or slowed Progressive measures in Congress.
Promoting Moral Improvement	Inc	No coursework submitted.
Fostering Efficiency	D+	Appointing Richard Ballinger as the Secretary of the Interior was a major blunder. His predecessor (Gifford Pinchot) was much better suited to the job. He does demonstrate efficiency in legal matters as evidenced by the 90 anti-trust suits.
Women's Issues	F	Taft is firmly opposed to women's suffrage.
African American Issues	F	Taft was unwilling to enforce the Civil War Amendments and African-Americans continue to face segregation, disenfranchisement, lynching, and other injustices. He publicly asserts that whites are a superior race.

COMMENTS:

Overall, Taft must be considered a failure as a Progressive president. He is obviously much too conservative to pursue any significant Progressive reforms. Taft often spent too much time pondering problems and not enough time taking any significant action. Major blunders such as the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, appointing Ballinger as Secretary of the Interior, and supporting Joseph Cannon ultimately contributed to deep divisions in the Republican Party. Under Taft's leadership, the division in the party clearly cost Republicans the presidency in the 1912 Election. Mr. Taft would be better suited to a career in law rather than politics.